

CONVERSIONS DESIRED

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great
number believed, and turned unto the Lord.”
Acts 11:21.*

THE brethren who had dwelt together in church fellowship at Jerusalem were scattered abroad by persecution which arose about Stephen; their Master had told them that when they were persecuted in one city, they were to flee to another; they obeyed His command, and in the course of escape from persecution they took very long journeys—very long journeys indeed for that age of the world, when travel was exceedingly difficult! And wherever they found themselves, they began at once to preach Jesus Christ, so that the scattering of the disciples was also a scattering of good seed in broader fields; the malice of Satan was made the instrument of the mercy of God! Learn from this, dear brothers and sisters, every one of you, that wherever you are called to go, you should persevere in making known the name and gospel of Jesus; look upon this as your calling and occupation! You will not now be scattered by persecution, but should the demands of business carry you into different countries, employ your distant travel for missionary purposes. Providence, every now and then, bids you move your tent—take care that wherever it is pitched, you carry with you a testimony for Jesus! At times the necessities of health require relaxation and change of air, and this may take you to different places of public resort—seize the opportunity to encourage the churches in such localities, by your presence and countenance, and also endeavor to spread the knowledge of Jesus among those to whom you may be directed. The position which you occupy in society is not an accidental one; it has not been decreed to you by a blind, purposeless fate; there is *predestination* in it, and that predestination is wise, and looks towards a merciful end. You are placed where you are that you may be a preserving salt to those around, a sweet savor of Christ to all who know you! The methods of divine grace have ordained a happy connection between you and the people with whom you associate; you are a messenger of mercy to them, a herald of good tidings, an epistle of Christ. The surrounding darkness needs you, and therefore it is written, “Among whom you shine as lights in the world.” You are intended to warn and rebuke some, to entreat and encourage others; to you the mourner looks for comfort, and the ignorant for instruction; let them never look in vain. Be the true friend of men; observe their condition before God, and endeavor to reclaim them from their wanderings. If Joseph was sent to Egypt that he might save his father’s house, you also are sent where you are for the sake of some hidden ones of the Lord’s chosen family. If Esther was placed in the court of a heathen king for the deliverance of her nation, so are you, my sister, called to occupy your present position for the good of the church of Christ. Look to it, brothers and sisters, lest you miss your life’s calling, and live in vain! It would be a sad thing indeed if you who profess to belong to Christ should be “creation’s blot, creation’s blank,” by having failed to work while it is called today!

These good people of the early church, with all their zeal were somewhat narrow-minded and hampered by their national prejudices, for they preached at first to only Jews, and it was very hard to make them see that the gospel was meant for the whole race of man, Gentiles as well as Jews. Their Master had said, “Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” and yet they began with preaching only to Jews; words could not have been plainer, and yet they missed their meaning. It is not to be wondered at that some in our day are still unable to preach to men as men, when we see how slow the early saints were to learn the lesson. Brethren, if there is any narrowness about our spirit, let us pray the Lord to take it away! We shall not, of course, be shackled as these Jews were by boasting of our nationality, but perhaps there may be classes of society of whom we despair, and therefore for whom we make no effort. We say, “It would be useless to attempt the conversion of such characters; I feel myself quite able to talk to other persons, and although I am placed in the midst of *these* people, I cannot bring

my mind to speak with them about spiritual things, for I feel hopeless of success.” Beloved, may you be delivered from this snare, and learn to sow beside all waters! The Gentiles, though they were for a while passed over by the brethren, turned out to be the most hopeful of all classes. From the Gentile fields they reaped harvests such as were never gathered in Judea! Antioch, with its Grecians, became famous among Christian churches—there the church of Christ first took its name amid a revival of religion when great multitudes believed and turned unto the Lord! God had from of old intended that the great majority of the election of grace should be gathered out of those very Gentiles whom even the Apostles themselves, scarcely ventured to address! Now then, my brother, in the light of this incident, begin to work where as yet you have done nothing—begin to hope where up to now you have despaired! Throw out your best energies in that very direction in which you have felt most hampered, for there awaits you to your own intense surprise, a success which will amply reward you. You need not restrict yourselves to lands familiar with the plow—invade the primeval forest; fell the ancient trees, and clear the broad acres—that virgin soil will yield you harvests a hundredfold such as you will never find in fields where others have labored before you! If your spiritual mining has become a failure, open fresh lodes of the precious metal, for veins of treasure lie concealed in the unbroken ground. Launch out into the deep! Let down your nets for a catch, and multitudes of fish shall crowd the net! It seems to me to be the obvious teaching of the text that wherever we are cast, we should try to do good, and that we may hope for the largest success among the most neglected portions of society.

Coming closely to the text, I desire to press upon you this morning, with great earnestness, the need of the conversion of men, and the desirableness that we should have many converted *here*. And I shall suggest what we can do to produce that result. In all these I beg to be assisted by the Holy Spirit, without whose aid I shall only exhibit my own weakness, and deaden those energies which I long to awake! These will be our heads—first, *the end we aim at*—that many may believe and turn unto the Lord; secondly, *the power by which this can be attained*—“The hand of the Lord was with them”; thirdly, *the desirableness of our objective*, and fourthly, *how we may promote its attainment*.

I. Let us speak upon THE END WHICH WE DESIRE. It may seem very commonplace, but it is in fact one of the grandest designs under heaven; he who contemplates it has a higher aim than philosopher, reformer, or patriot; he aims at that for which the Son of God both lived and died! We desire that men may believe; that is to say, first, that they may believe the testimony of Jesus Christ to be true, for there are some who have not attained as far as that; they reject altogether the inspired word, and to them the incarnation, the redemption, the resurrection, the glory, and the second advent are so many old wives’ fables. You to whom these truths are the light of your lives can scarcely realize the power of the unbelief of this kind, and yet some men live and die in its gloom! We pray that they may be taught better, and that the evidence of these great facts may be forced home upon them; alas, there are many who *profess* to believe these things, but their only reason for doing so is that they have been taught so from their childhood, and it is the current religion of the nation! They regard the inspiration of Scripture, and so on as matters about which it is not expedient to trouble themselves—they do not care one way or the other about them. They find it the easier and more respectable plan to admit the truth of the gospel, and think no more about it; such a vain complimentary belief is rather an insult to our holy faith than a thing to be rejoiced in! But, dear friends, we need more than this faith of indifference which is little more than dishonest unbelief! We need men to believe for themselves because they are *personally convinced*, and have felt in themselves the saving power of Christ Jesus! We pray that nominal believers may treat the doctrines of revelation, not as dogmas, but as *facts*; not as opinions, but as *truths of God*—as surely facts as the events of history, as much truths as the actual incidents of everyday life, for alas, the grand doctrines of the eternal truths are frequently treated as venerable nonentities, and have no effect whatever upon the conduct of those who profess to receive them because they do not realize them as matters of fact, or see their solemn bearings! It is shocking to reflect that a change in the weather has more effect on some men’s lives than the dread alternative of heaven or hell; a woman’s glance affects them more than the eye of God! We therefore desire to see men really and truly believing the facts of the gospel in an honest, practical manner,

We cannot, however, be content with this! We labor *that those around us may savingly believe by putting their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ*; this is the grand saving act—the man brings his soul, and commits it to Christ for safe keeping; and that entrusting of the soul to Jesus saves him! He makes the

Savior trustee of his spiritual estate, and leaves himself and all his eternal interests in those dear hands which once were nailed to the cross! Oh, how we long to see the Holy Spirit bringing men to this, that they may believe in Jesus Christ by resting in Him, and trusting upon Him! For this we live; for this we would be content to die that many might believe!

The end we aim at is that men may so believe in Jesus that they may be altogether changed in their relation towards God, for “many believed *and turned unto the Lord.*” What does that mean? It means that these heathen gave up their idols, and began to worship the only Living and True God! We desire, dear Hearers, that faith in the Lord Jesus may lead you to give up the objects of your idolatrous love—yourselves, your money, your pleasures, the world, the flesh, the devil, and there are even some whose God is their belly, and who glory in their shame! When a man believes in Jesus Christ, he puts away his false gods, and worships the great Father of Spirits; he makes no inferior objective the aim of his being, but from then on lives for the glory of God! This is a glorious turning, a complete conversion of the man’s heart and soul!

To turn to God means not merely to forsake the false god for the true, but to turn from the love of sin! Sin lies that way, but God’s glory lies in the opposite quarter; he who looks sin-ward has *his back to God*; he who looks God-ward has *his back to sin*! It is blessed conversion when men turn from the folly of sin to the glory of God! With weeping and supplication do men so turn, confessing their wrongdoing, lamenting their transgressions, abhorring their evil lusts, desiring pardon, and hoping for renewal of their nature. Precious in the sight of the Lord are the tears of penitence, and the sighs of contrite hearts! We can never be satisfied with the results of our ministry unless faith leads man to hearty repentance towards God, an intense loathing of their sins, and *an actual forsaking of them.*

To turn to God means that from now on God shall be sought in prayer; “Behold he prays” is one of the indications of a true convert; the man who lives without prayer lives without God, but the man who has turned to God is familiar with the mercy seat. What a turning it is when the eyes are turned upward to seek the Lord—with the solemn glances of the eyes when none but God is near! To turn to God means to yield obediently to His sway, to be willing to do what He bids, to think what He teaches, and to be what He commands! Faith is nothing unless it brings with it a willing and obedient mind. Willful rebellion is the child of unbelief—sincere obedience is the offspring of humble believing. “They believed, and turned unto the Lord.” We want men to turn so that their whole life shall be a going towards God, growing more like He, a closer communing with Him, leading on to the soul’s becoming perfectly like He, and dwelling forever where He is.

Now, dear friends, when I speak thus of believing and turning unto God, some will say, “Well, but that must be a very easy matter, only to believe and turn.” Yes, my brothers and sisters, it appears simple, but it is none the less, vitally *essential.* “He that believes on the Lord Jesus has everlasting life; but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed.” You say, “Why make all this stir about it?” Because upon this apparently little matter depends the present and eternal condition of the sinner! To believe and to turn to God is to be delivered from the present dominion of sin, and from the future punishment of it; to be without faith and without God is to be without joy here, and without hope hereafter! Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is what you and I must aim at in all our attempts to influence our fellow men! It may be useful to reform them, but it is far better that grace should regenerate them! God speed every effort to promote sobriety, chastity, thrift, honesty, and morality—but you and I are sent for something *more* than this—our work goes deeper, and is more difficult! It is not ours to wash the African, but to seek to change his skin; we do not so much pray that the lion may be tamed as that he may be turned into a lamb; it may be well to lop the branches of the tree of sin, but our business is to lay the axe at the root of the trees by leading men to turn to God; this is a change, not merely of the outward conduct, but of the *heart*! And if we do not see this result—if men do not believe and turn to God—we have labored in vain, and spent our strength for nothing and in vain. If there is no believing and turning to the Lord, we may go to our secret chambers, and bewail ourselves before God because none have believed our report, and the arm of the Lord has not been revealed! Praying in the Holy Spirit, and depending upon His power, push on with this one sole objective. Drive at it, you teachers in the Sunday school; do not be satisfied with *instructing* the children—labor to have them converted! Drive at it, you preachers—do not believe that you have done your work when you have taught the people—you must never rest till they believe in Jesus Christ! Pursue this end in every sermon or Sunday school ad-

dress—throw your whole soul into this one objective—aim at it saying, “This one thing I do.” Yours must not be a cold inculcation of an external morality, but a warm enthusiasm for an inward *regeneration*! You are not to bring men to believe in themselves, and so become self-made men, but to lead them to believe in Jesus, and to become new creatures in Him! There is our end and aim—are we all alive to it?

II. Secondly, let us consider THE POWER BY WHICH THIS CAN BE ATTAINED—“The hand of the Lord was with them.” None ever believe in Jesus except those in whom God’s arm has been revealed, for Jesus says, “No man can come to Me except the Father, which has sent Me, draws him.” But, brother ministers, in answer to prayer, that power *has been revealed* among His people, and is with them still! His arm is not shortened that He cannot save, neither has He withdrawn it from His church. Be encouraged while I suggest to you a few thoughts. The hand of God is upon many of our friends before we speak to them. It is most pleasant to me, when I am seeing inquirers, to observe how God makes ready the hearts of my hearers; I am studying a certain subject, and praying to God for a blessing on it—and upstairs in a chamber, which I have never seen, one of my hearers is being made ready for my message! He is struck with a sense of sin, or troubled with uneasy thoughts, or rendered hopeful of better things—and thus he is being made ready to accept the Christ whom I shall preach to him! Yes, and ready to accept that particular form of the gospel message which the Spirit of God gave me when I preached! There on a sick bed will lay a woman painfully exercised with the sad memory of her sinful life, in order that when she comes up to the house of God, every word may have power over her! Sickness and pain, shame and poverty often produce a condition of mind most hopeful for the reception of the gospel. A man well-to-do in circumstances has been ruined in business; he despairs of happiness below, and therefore comes to hear the gospel, made willing to seek his happiness above! Another has lately felt failures of bodily strength, and so has been warned that life is frail—and thus he is prepared to listen to the admonitions which speak of eternity! Courage, minister of God! You are nothing, but the Almighty God is with you! When you lift your hand to build the house of the Lord, omnipotence works with you, and names your labor a success; every revolution of those awful wheels, so ponderous that even the prophet said, “O wheel!” is working to accomplish the objective which is near your heart; the stars in their courses fight for you! The stones of the field are in league with you! Eternal wisdom plans for you, infinite power works with you, divine patience perseveres with you, and almighty love will conquer by you! “The hand of the Lord was with them.” What more do we need? Sow, brother, for God has plowed! Go up and build, for God has prepared the stones, and made ready the foundation!

Moreover, the hand of the Lord is with His people in helping the teachers and preachers themselves. There are strange impulses which come over us at times, which make us think and say what otherwise had never crossed our minds—and these work with His power upon men’s minds! If you will live to win souls it shall be given you in the same hour what you shall speak; you will often say to an inquirer what you would not have beforehand arranged to say, but God who knows that inquirer’s heart better than you do, has prevented your saying what you would have liked to have said, and has led you to say what you afterwards judged to be a mistake! My experience teaches me that we are often wise in our ignorance, and as often foolish in our wisdom; we have frequently done best when we felt that we did but badly, and if we will but trust God, and be whole-hearted in the winning of souls we shall have a power assisting us in our speech of which the greatest orator in the world is not aware! Speak in the House of Commons for a party, and you will have to look *within* for aid, but speak in the House of the Lord, and you may look *upward for spiritual aid*. The poet invokes the fabled muses, but for you, O servant of the Lord, there is real help from a higher source! Think of this, you workers, and be encouraged! Besides providence and the gracious help by which good men speak, there is a distinct work of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of men where the gospel is preached. Not only is the Spirit in the Word, but over and above that, in His own elect, God works most effectually so His truth is rendered irresistible. Let us never forget where our great strength lies, for in this matter we must rely alone upon the Spirit of God! How often has God worked in the power of His grace by making men feel the majesty of the word? They come perhaps to hear the preacher out of idle curiosity; they look for something which shall amuse them—but the truth of God comes home to them and searches their heart! Simple as the language is, “As if an angel spoke they hear the solemn sound.” And it goes through them like a dart, and they cannot help feeling, “Surely God was there, and He spoke with me!”

The Spirit of God makes men remember their sins; they try to forget them, but sometimes they cannot. Sad memories steal over them, and wholesome regrets fatigue their very souls; men who have been giddy, careless, and forgetful, have all of a sudden found themselves turning over the pages of their old diaries, and with thoughtfulness reviewing the past. All this leads to repentance and faith! That same Spirit makes men see the beauty of holiness; they cannot help admiring it, though they are far from it; they are charmed with the loveliness of the character of Jesus, and begin to feel that there is something about it which they would wish to imitate. When the preacher proclaims the way of salvation, the same Spirit leads men to admire it, and to say within themselves, "There is something here which human wisdom could never have devised"—and they begin to long for a share in it! A wish takes possession of their heart, as though some strange bird from an unknown land had flown into their souls, and had amazed them with a new song! They do not know where the desire came from, but they feel strangely bound to entertain the stranger. Sometimes the Spirit blows like a hurricane through men's hearts, and they have been borne along by His power without the will to resist; as when a tempest rushes across the sea, and drives the frail boat before it helplessly, so have I known the divine Spirit sweep away the peace and quiet of the soul's self-righteousness, stir up the deeps of inward trouble, make the soul reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man—and impel the heart forward to the iron-bound coast of self-despair where every false hope and vain-glorious trust has been wrecked forever! Glory be to God when this is the case, for then the soul is driven to cling to Jesus!

Yes, brothers, it is not the preacher and it is not altogether what the preacher says, but there is a power abroad, as potent as that by which the worlds were made! Unbelievers sometimes ask, "Where is your God?" O sirs, if you once felt the power of the great Spirit, you would never ask that question! "Since the fathers fell asleep," they say, "all things continue as they were." But this they willingly are ignorant of, that new creations are being worked every day; that there are men and women alive in this world who are neither liars nor enthusiasts, who can declare that upon their spirit the eternal power and Godhead has operated and changed them; it has conquered them, and holds them as willing captives to its supreme Majesty! Yes, brothers, there is a hand of the Lord, and that hand of the Lord is still with His people! If it is not, then we shall see no believing and no turning to God; but since it is still at work among us, let us work on, for as surely as we live we shall see great numbers converted to God, and God will be glorified!

III. Let us now dwell upon THE DESIRABLENESS OF CONVERSIONS. It is no new thing to you and to me to see many believing and turning to God. These 22 years God's hand has been stretched out—we have had no spasm of revival; we have not alternated between furious spurts, and sudden lulls. But month by month, I think I might say Sunday by Sunday, souls have been saved, and the church has grown exceedingly, and God has been glorified. What we have enjoyed we desire to retain—yes, we would have more! The Lord says to us what he said to the church at Philadelphia, "Hold fast what you have, that no man take your crown," and our crown is the crown of soul-winning, which we must hold fast, for we cannot endure to lose it! This must be our crown, that we have preached the gospel, both minister and church members, and have been all of us soul-winners! We desire this because first of all, we desire to see the truth of God, godliness, virtue, and holiness extended. Who among you does not? Does not every good man wish others to be good; every honest man wish others to be honest? Does not every man who loves his family desire that other families should be well-ordered? Oh, then, if there were no nobler reason, you may desire that men may be converted, since conversion is the root of everything that is pure and lovely, and of good report!

You desire too that your fellow creatures should be happy, but there is no such happiness as that which springs out of reconciliation to God! The peace which you enjoy through pardoned sin must surely make you desire that others may possess the same! If religion is indeed a source of perennial joy to yourself, you are inhuman if you do not wish others to drink of it! brothers and sisters, as you would make eyes sparkle; as you would make countenances radiant with delight; as I know you would spread gladness on all sides—desire above all things that your children, your relations, your neighbors, and your friends should be converted to God! Thus shall thorns and briars give place to myrtles and roses, and deserts shall be turned into gardens of the Lord!

I am sure you also desire conversions because you feel the dreadful hazard of unconverted men. You have not yet subscribed to the modern doctrine that these men and women around you are only two-

legged cats and dogs, and horses, and will ultimately die out and *cease to be*. You believe in the God-given *immortality* of human souls—a heritage from which no man can escape, the noblest of all man's endowments—in itself the highest of all gifts, though sin may pervert it into the direst of all evils! You would have scant motives for desiring men's conversion if you did not believe that there is another and everlasting state! But believing that men live hereafter, and exist forever, I am sure you must be eager that men may escape from the wrath to come. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, you would persuade men! Judging that there is one of two things for them all, either "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," or else "The righteous into life eternal," you can never rest until you feel convinced that those about you are partakers of eternal life! Look at any unconverted person, and your sympathies should be awakened; if I saw tokens of fever, or marks of consumption in the face of anyone I loved, I would be struck with alarm! What then must I feel when I see damnation—as I do see it—in the face of every unbeliever? How is it that we are not more distressed than we are when men are perishing in their sins? Why, my brethren are we not more intent upon the conversion of men? Let these questions humble us, and cause great searchings of heart. It is a shame to us that we have so little of the mind of Christ; so little compassion for men's souls.

Moreover, brothers and sisters, self-preservation is a law of nature, and the church can never preserve herself except by increasing from the world by *conversion*. Where are the preachers for the next generation? Today they are among the ungodly, and we must labor to bring them to God! Where are the stones that are to make the next course in the walls of our Zion? They are not quarried yet, and we must, by God's grace, excavate them! We who now labor for the Lord will soon go our ways; our thrones and crowns are waiting for us, and the angels are beckoning us away. Who will fill our places? Who will bear the banner? Who will blow the trumpet? Who will wield the sword? We must find new champions in the ranks of the foe—they must be born unto God, and we must pray that this may be accomplished by our instrumentality!

Seek conversions *for Christ's sake*! You know the agony and bloody sweat—shall these be spent in vain? You know the nailing to the cross, and the shriek of "Why have You forsaken Me?" Shall these be unrewarded? You have thought over and trusted in the bitter pangs of your Redeemer's death—shall He not see of the travail of His soul? Shall He not be satisfied? These lost sheep are His sheep, for which He shed His precious blood! These lost pieces of money are His money, and they bear His Image and superscription—shall they not be found? These lost sons spending their living in riotousness are His brothers, children of His Father—do you not desire, for Jesus' sake, that they should be brought home?

Dear friends, what joy it will be to yourselves if men believe and turn to the Lord by your means! I put that motive last, and hope it will not be the strongest, but it may yet be one of the liveliest. What joy it will be to yourselves if you see many converted! Somebody has asked, "If the heathen are not evangelized, what will become of them?" I will put another question of a far more practical character. If *you* do not *try* to evangelize the heathen, *what will become of you?* Do not so much inquire about *their* destiny as your own if you have no care for their salvation! He who never seeks the conversion of another is in imminent danger of being damned himself. I do not believe in any man's salvation who is wrapped up in self! Assuredly he is not saved from *selfishness*! I cannot believe in any man possessing the Spirit of God who is indifferent to the condition of others—one of the *first* fruits of the Spirit is love! Even as flowers at their very first blooming, shed their perfume, so do the saved ones, in their earliest days of grace, desire the good of their fellows. I know that one of my earliest impulses, when I first looked to Christ, and lost the burden of my sin, was to tell everybody around me of the blessings I had received, for I longed to make others as happy as I was. I fear that you who never try to win souls lack an essential part of the Christian character. I leave the question with your own consciences.

IV. Fourthly, let us inquire, WHAT WE CAN DO TO PROMOTE CONVERSIONS. Conversion is God's work. It cannot be worked without His hand; without Him we can do nothing; our hands are far too puny for such a work. The power of the first disciples, and our own lies in the fact mentioned in the text—"The hand of the Lord was with them." Still, there are certain circumstances under which that hand will work, and there are hindrances which will restrain it. Let us think for a while. First, then, if sinners are to be converted, *we must distinctly aim at it*. As a rule, a man does what he tries to do, and not that which is mere by-play. The conversion of sinners is not one of those things which a man is likely to accomplish without intending it. Sometimes in the sovereignty of God, a preacher who does not

aim at conversion may nevertheless be made useful, for God works as He wills. But as a rule, men do not win souls if they do not eagerly desire to do so; fishing for men cannot be carried out by throwing in the net without caring whether fish are caught or not! Few traders become rich by accident—they generally have to plod and work hard for money; and to be rich in treasures of saved souls you must aim at it, and labor for it. I am struck with astonishment as I think how many sermons are preached, how many Sunday school addresses are given, how many religious books are written of which you are quite sure that the intention was *not* immediate conversion! It is thought that in some unknown way these good things may accidentally contribute to men's salvation, but they are not aimed at as their present objective! Ah, brother, if you want men to come to Christ, you must preach Christ to them with all your heart—with this design—that they may *immediately* close in with Christ and at once give their hearts to Jesus! Yes, and you are to pray that they may do so through the present effort which you are making for their good. There is the target, and if you continue to shoot into the air long enough, an arrow may strike it; but, man alive, if you want to win the prize of archery you had better fix your eye upon the white, and take your aim distinctly and with skill! If an individual would win souls, he must bend his whole soul to it, and make it the objective of his whole energy!

Next to that we must take care, if we would have souls won, that we press upon them the truths which God usually blesses. Shall I read to you the verse before my text? Here it is—"They spoke unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus, and the hand of the Lord was with them." Now, if we do not preach Jesus Christ, we shall not see souls saved! There are certain forms of doctrines which condemn themselves by working out their own extinction. Did you ever hear of a minister whose preaching leaned towards Unitarianism, but what the congregation sooner or later began to diminish? Though many such preachers have been men of great ability, they have not as a rule been able to keep the dead thing on its feet! You shall go into our small towns, and you may find an ancient chapel which was once an Independent, or a Presbyterian, or it may be a Baptist chapel; but if you see over the door, "Unitarians," you have, as a rule, seen all that there is, for there is neither church nor congregation worthy of the name—frequently the place is never opened at all, and the grass grows knee deep on the path to the door! Even when these little places are used, you will generally find that they contain half a dozen nobodies who think themselves everybody as to intellect and culture! It is a religion of the utmost value to spiders, for those insects are able to spin their webs in the meeting houses without fear! Who ever heard; who will ever hear of a Unitarian Whitefield, or a Socinian Moody gathering 20,000 people to listen to a Christless gospel? It is a phenomenon which never has been seen, and never will be! Men's instincts lead them to turn away from a creed which contains so little which can solace the troubled soul.

If we want souls saved, we must equally avoid the modern intellectual system in all its classes. "Oh," cries somebody, "you should hear the great Mr. Bombast. It is—Oh, I cannot tell you what it is, but something very wonderful! It is an intellectual treat." Just so, but how many conversions are worked by this wonderful display of genius? How many hearts are broken by fine rhetoric? How many broken hearts are healed by philosophy? So far as I have observed, I find that God does not save souls by intellectual treats!

Certain views as to man's future are equally to be kept clear of if you would be the means of conversion. Diminish your ideas of the wrath of God and the terrors of hell—and in that proportion you will diminish the results of your work! I could not conceive a Bunyan or a Baxter, or any other great soul-winner, falling into these new notions, or if he did, that would be an end to his success! Other crotchets and novelties of doctrine are also to be left alone, for they are not likely to promote your objective, but will most probably divert men's attention from the vital point. Dear brothers, if you want a harvest, look well to your seed! Time was when gardeners threw all the little potatoes on one side for seed, and then they had bad crops. Now I have seen them pick out the very best, and put them by! "We must have good seed," they say. If I had to sow my fields with wheat, I would not take the tail seed; I should grudge no expense about seed, for it would be false economy to buy any but the very best! Go preach, teach, and instruct with the best doctrine, even that of God's Word, for, depend upon it, though the result is not in *your* hands, yet it very much depends upon *what* you teach! O, eternal and ever blessed Spirit, guide Your servants into all truth!

Next to this, if you want to win souls for Christ, feel a solemn alarm about them; you cannot make them feel if you do not feel yourself. Believe their danger; believe their helplessness; believe that only

Christ can save them, and talk to them as if you meant it. The Holy Spirit will move them by first moving you; if you can rest without their being saved, they will rest too! But if you are filled with an agony for them; if you cannot bear that they should be lost, you will soon find that they are uneasy too. I hope you will get into such a state that you will dream about your child, or about your hearer perishing for lack of Christ—and start up at once, and begin to cry, “O God, give me converts or I die!” Then you will have converts—there is no fear about that; God does not send travail pangs to His servants without causing them to abound in spiritual children! There will be new births to God when you are agonizing for them!

But let me add, *there must be much prayer!* Delight to be at prayer meetings where the brethren will not let the Lord go except He blesses them! When a brother prays, choking as he speaks, tears rolling down his cheeks as he pleads with God to have mercy on the sons of men, I am always certain that sinners are ordained to be blessed when I see saints thus compelled to plead with God for them! In your closets alone, at your family altars, and in your gatherings for prayer, be *importunate*, and the hand of the Lord must and will be with you! Cry aloud and spare not; plead as for your lives, and bring forth your strong arguments, for only by prevailing with God will you be enabled to prevail with men.

Then there must be added to prayer *direct personal effort on the part of all of you*. Great numbers may be saved by my preaching if the Holy Spirit blesses it, but I shall expect *larger* numbers if you *all* turn preachers; if every brother and sister here becomes a witness for Christ. Are you lazy? Are any of you beginning to sleep? I charge you, wake up! By the love you bear to Jesus, and by the love you bear to your fellow men, begin at once to seek the conversion of those who dwell around you. O my beloved, do not become lukewarm! My heart fails me at the very thought! If you are earnest, I live—if you grow slothful, my spirit dies within me!

Last of all, if you want to see many converts, *expect them!* “According to your faith so be it unto you.” Look out for them; believe that God will bless every sermon, and go hunting after the sermon, to see where the converts are. As a company of butlers and camp-followers generally follow every army—and after a battle go up to strip the slain—so if you cannot preach, I would have you follow after the warriors to gather in the spoil. No one needed to urge the voracious spoilers to prowl over the field of Sedan or Gravelotte, but now it even seems necessary to persuade you to collect a far nobler prey! Come up! Come up, you servants of the Lord, and divide the spoil with the strong! Christ has fought your battle; His arrows have been sharp in the hearts of the King’s enemies; His two-edged sword has struck right and left—come up, you sons of Jacob, to the prey and gather in the converts as your spoil! Speak with the young converts; cheer the broken hearts; comfort the seekers, and bring into His palace trophies for your Lord! Verily, I say unto you, if you look not for conversions, neither shall you obtain them! And you cannot blame the Lord—you are not straitened in Him—but in your own hearts! God bless you, beloved, and may we have a larger increase to this church during the next month than we have had for years past, that our God may have greater praise!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 11.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—887, 450, 881.

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